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Cultural heritage and art archives that exist exclusively online are becoming increasingly popular, however little has been written about their particularities. This paper presents an exploratory study of four different online cultural heritage archives: the African American Performance art Archive, Documents of 20th – century Latin American and Latino Art, Public Art Archive and Europeana. Through website analysis, each project was surveyed with respect to their mission, producer, collection development, collection materials and online presence. A synthesis of that information compares the online archives to one another and to traditional, physical archives and argues that although online archives represent a challenge to certain archival principles and practices, they also embody the monumental changes in archival science brought forth by postmodern theory and the internet. These projects raise important questions about what an archive is and what it can achieve, and should therefore be included in wider discussions about the future of the field.

Headings:

- Online archives
- Virtual archives
- Digital archives
- Art archives
- Archival theory
- Postmodern theory
- Archives 2.0

THE CHANGING FACE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ART ARCHIVES:
THE CHALLENGE AND PROMISE OF ONLINE, DIGITAL REPOSITORIES

by
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INTRODUCTION

Archive is only a notion, an impression associated with a word... nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word archive.

— Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*

Since the 1990s there has been increasing interest in the “archive” as both a concept and an institution. Archivists, along with scholars from a range of disciplines such as philosophy, history, sociology, literature, and political science, have struggled to clearly define the word and understand its many connotations (Manoff, 2004, p. 9). Postmodern theory as developed and put forth primarily by Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault has contributed significantly to archival critique and the resultant shifting perceptions about what constitutes an archive. The advent of the internet and other digital technologies has also had a profound intellectual and practical effect on the field of archival studies. The traditional definition of archives as a physical repository of evidentiary records is no longer inclusive enough, since archives have expanded into the online realm (Rylance, 2006).

Archives and other cultural institutions have long been in the process of digitizing their collections and making them available online with the primary goal of improving access and preservation, and the internet has proven to be an invaluable tool to that end. The internet has also allowed for the development of a different kind of archive, one that exists exclusively as a website, rather than an online interface used to access the digitized

form of analog materials housed in a physical repository. These online archives and their aggregated content consist of curated records culled from other archives, cultural foundations and even individuals. Unlike traditional archives, these sites provide access to materials more often united and presented by theme rather than provenance. Some solicit user participation or rely on institutional collaboration, while others may be the endeavor of a sole enthusiast. The sites reviewed in this paper feature a range of art related information, from images of three-dimensional art objects, to digital reproductions of archival documents produced by an artist.

These resources complicate definitions of archives and collections, and further blur boundaries between archives, libraries and museums (Marcum, 2014). As early as 1998, Boyd Rayward wrote, “The advent of electronic sources of information and their ever increasing volume and variety will require a major redefinition and integration of the role of archives, museums and research libraries” (Boyd, 1998, p. 207). Since that time, many others have commented on the “digital convergence” of cultural heritage institutions, a situation made apparent by the projects discussed here (Marcum, 2014; Marty, 2014). While these websites may present as virtual museums or digital libraries, they often are identified as archives first and foremost. As such, online archives represent a challenge to the concept of archival appraisal and the core principles of provenance and original order, thereby encouraging a reconceptualization of archival practice (Monks-Leeson, 2011).

An examination and discussion of online archives is notably lacking from the archival science literature. This paper explores the issues these types of collections raise,

and considers the ways in which four online, cultural heritage and art archives challenge and engage with traditional approaches to archival theory and practice. The goal is not to provide a conclusive definition or redefinition of “archive.” Rather, through close analysis and comparison of these relatively new resources, this paper provides insights into the changing definition and possibilities of archives in the 21st century.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of authors have written about the “paradigm shifts” in archival theory and practice brought about by the digital revolution (Taylor, 1987; Hedstrom, 1991; Bearman, 1993; Cook, 1994; Koltun, 1999). In 1998, Richard Cox claimed that archivists and records professionals “must remain up-to-date not only with the technical aspects of harnessing technology, but with the implications of the wider societal use of technology, as well as how technology may change their disciplines” (Cox, p. 25). But in 2002, Margaret Hedstrom wrote that archivists were more interested with the technical management of electronic records than on the “later acts of contextualization, representation, or use of digital archives” (Hedstrom, p. 23). Online, digital archives pose interesting questions related to these “later acts” and “societal implications,” but more than a decade later, the literature pertaining specifically to how the development of online archives differs from and influences traditional archival practice is surprisingly sparse. These types of collections are rarely discussed as a distinct phenomenon, despite the fact that they are becoming more prevalent, particularly within the arts and humanities disciplines. This literature review will begin with the one known study about online-only archives, as defined in the introduction of this paper, and continue with a review of the effects of postmodernism and interactive web technologies on archival science, for these theoretical and practical developments have made the rise of online archives possible.

Monks-Leeson's 2011 examination of the WWI Poetry Digital Archive and the Walt Whitman Archive considers how these websites complicate the traditional archival understanding of provenance and the ways in which these sites influence how users understand the meaning and context of archival records (p. 40). She concludes that online archives are more like digital libraries than archives per se, since they are assembled and organized thematically: "What defines an archive online thus seems to depend on its ability to archive, rather than any specificity to its meaning as *an archives*" (Monks-Leeson, 2011, p. 53). These websites are just one example of how the meaning of archives has changed as the field of archival science becomes more inter-disciplinary. According to Manoff, the archive has become a central concept "to both the scholarly enterprise and the existence of democratic society" (Manoff, 2004, p. 14). Discourse around the role of the archive in the management and preservation of cultural knowledge has been adopted by scholars from a variety of disciplines, which has resulted in less-precise usage of the word and broader interpretations of its meaning and significance.

Monks-Leeson suggests that online archives embody the challenges to provenance and context that were put forth by postmodern theory. Provenance is concerned with maintaining a lineage of the record's origin and custodial history. Her analysis demonstrates that although online archives are fundamentally different from their analog antecedents there remains a focus on context, albeit with an understanding of its inherent malleability. Thus the author concludes that the rise in popularity of online archives will have a significant impact on how records are managed and used. For these reasons, it is important that archivists ask and explore what the term "archives" means in online contexts.

Postmodernism and the Archive

The influence of postmodern theory on archival science has been significant, prompting a questioning of the traditions and values of the field, as well as the term itself. The word *Archive* has moved beyond the jurisdiction of the professional archivist and has been appropriated by other disciplines and, perhaps more significantly, popular culture. As Sue Breakell (2008) explains, the traditional definition of an archive as a place where historical records are kept, has been replaced by a popular understanding of archives that “seems to embrace any group of objects, particularly digital, that are gathered together and actively preserved.” Terry Cook (2000) notes that archival documents once served a “judicial-administrative” function and were kept by the state for their evidentiary value, but archives are now more understood to be based in a social context and recognized as potentially significant to everyone (p. 18). Archiving projects like those described by Monks-Leeson and the cases presented in this paper, are examples of conscious public and individual efforts to collect and preserve culturally important documents that might otherwise be overlooked. The fact that such objects are being made so widely accessible online is indication of a commitment to the belief that cultural archives are indeed significant to everyone.

This democratization of archives can be linked to the work of postmodern theorists Derrida and Foucault, whose writings have had a profound effect on the field by raising questions about how the preservation of human knowledge and memory relates to power and justice (Schwartz & Cook, 2002, p. 4). The ardent archival discussion spurred by the 1996 publication of Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, prompted Cook (2001) to label the period “the Derrida aftershock” (p. 21). The book, and the lecture on which it was based,

critiqued the view of any representational media as neutral and called into question the supposed objective institutional authority held by archives and their stewards. Archives are sites of contested political power, and archivists are capable of dictating memory and history with their power to choose what will be saved in perpetuity and what will be lost to time. As Derrida (1996) succinctly states: “There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory. Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and the access to the archive, its constitution, and its interpretation.” (p. 4). Through the lens of postmodern critique, the subjective nature of archives was made more evident. Far from being invisible warehouses of information, archives themselves, as well as the records they sheltered, were seen as deserving of research and investigation. The field has ultimately come to embrace and engage with this political reality.

Terry Cook recognized the value of postmodern critique in the profession and advocated for it as a valid theoretical framework for archival science. For Cook and many others, archival postmodernism is concerned with the “context behind the content” and the “power relationships that shape the documentary heritage” (Cook, 2001, p. 25). The context of archival material should be understood as multifaceted and dynamic, capable of being variably perceived by the way it is collected, preserved and represented. In 2001, Cook hypothesized that the image of the archive as put forth by postmodern theorists would, “Shape the outlook of new archivists coming to us, and transform researchers and sponsors’ expectations” (p. 22). In the years since Cook made his astute statement, researchers’ and sponsors’ expectations *have* undergone a dramatic change, and this turn has required a response from the archival community. There is now a desire and

expectation among users that more research material be available online and for archives in general to be more user focused and open to the public. There has also been increased interest in diversifying archival collections and archiving the histories of marginalized groups that were previously ignored by institutional repositories. While significant gains have been made in this respect, the internet provides an ideal setting for the formation and representation of specialized collections. For example, two of the online archives discussed here: The Documents of 20th Century Latin American and Latino Art and the African American Performance Art Archive, were created in response to the lack of pertinent primary source material available in established institutions and repositories. Both Latino and African American art has long been excluded from the mainstream canon of art history and as a result related archival material has not been as consistently or thoroughly collected, preserved, and made available. The accessibility of the internet allows for groups and individuals to create niche archives that redress previous oversight.

Along with destabilizing the cultural hegemony represented by the institutional archive, a postmodern approach to archives highlights the importance of mediation in the transmission of information. As Tom Nesmith (2002) writes, “A hallmark of the postmodern view of communication is that there is no way to avoid or neutralize entirely the limits of the mediating influences which, thus, inevitably shape our understanding” (p. 26). If the medium is, in fact, the message as McLuhan famously claimed in 1964 (p. 7), then it is critical to consider how archives shape the knowledge they hold. Nesmith suggests that archivists reflect upon and study the archiving process itself, including the vast array of new technologies that have altered how archives are managed and maintained.

The Internet and the Archive

From magnetic tape to web 2.0, many have commented on the impact of digital technologies on archives and archival records. The move from paper and print to electronic and then networked data has happened rapidly and lead to critical shifts in the perceived and actual capabilities of archives. Just as Cook believed postmodern theory would affect public and professional opinions about archives, Richard Cox believed the internet would alter society's expectations for information access, as much as it would alter the profession (Cox, 2007). One major effect of increased internet usage was what he termed "the compression of time." (Cox, 2007, p. 28-29). The speed at which the internet can deliver information and services transferred to an expectation that archival materials would be processed and made available more quickly than in the past, "While archivists have tended to take ample time in arranging and describing records... Researchers will increasingly want precise hits of full-text documents relevant to their needs at an increasingly faster access rate" (Cox, 2007, p. 29). More recently, Louise Craven (2008) has noted that changes in the way people think about archives and their role in society has coincided with radical technological developments (p. 8). The internet and Google culture has brought about significant changes for the archival profession as it has allowed for greater access to more information, which has led to the primacy of individuals and communities over institutions and governments (Craven, 2008). Together, the internet and postmodern critiques of archival authority has led to a rise in online archives that consist of pieced together, curated collections that often meet an unfulfilled information need. As Andrew Flinn (2008) has argued, initiatives to

democratize archives can be seen in the growth of individual and distinct online archives that serve a specific and specialized group.

In accordance with the trend toward public access, in recent years the archive profession has also jumped on the web 2.0 bandwagon. Web 2.0 is a term that has entered popular parlance to describe a shift on the internet away from static websites towards more dynamic sites and applications that incorporate user-generated content, social media and networking. In 2008 Mary Samouelian recognized this shift and conducted a small exploratory review of college and university repositories in the United States that showed that archivists had started to embrace Web 2.0 technologies, particularly blogs and wikis, to promote their online collections and encourage public engagement. Kate Theimer (2011), has also argued that the archival profession is undergoing a fundamental shift and that the term Web 2.0 is useful in describing those changes (p. 59). As further evidence of archival postmodernism, Theimer (2001) talks about Archives 2.0 as, “an approach to archival practice that promotes openness and flexibility” and calls for archivists to be “user centered and embrace opportunities to use technology to share collections, interact with users, and improve internal efficiency” (p. 60). She goes on to provide a list of ways Archives 2.0 differ from “Archives 1.0”: Archives that embrace digital technologies are open, transparent, user centered, and the archivists are viewed as facilitators rather than gatekeepers (Theimer, 2011, p. 61). Although both Samouelian and Theimer refer to traditional archives that use digital technologies as opposed to online-only archives, their findings and suggestions are useful in illustrating how online archives embody many of the new ideals progressive archives are striving for.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study consists of a content analysis of the websites of four online archives: The African American Performance Art Archive (www.aapaa.org), Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art (<http://icaadocs.mfah.org>), the Public Art Archive (<http://www.publicartarchive.org/>), and Europeana (<http://www.europeana.eu/portal/>). In order to obtain a clear overview of the projects' scope and significance, each project is analyzed according to five key categories: mission, producer, collection development and content, and website. Comparisons are made across these four sites and are synthesized within the broader context of the modern history of archival theory and practice. The online archives discussed here represent a range of content, acquisition techniques, and organizational structures that demonstrate the multifarious ways online cultural heritage and art archives can take shape.

The AAPAA was selected because it is a unique, small-scale project concerned with the archival documents of living performance artists. This is in contrast to Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art, which was chosen because it is a comprehensive collection of archival art material that was produced with the support of large institutions over the course of a decade. The Public Art Archive is reviewed because it does not deal with archival material at all, rather, it is a continually growing database of information about works of public art in the United States and Canada. The final website, Europeana, differs from the others in that it is a digital portal, or aggregator of digitized cultural heritage content from libraries, archives and museums.

Europeana has been a great success and is perhaps the best known project of its kind, devoted to the digital accessibility of cultural heritage. It was therefore included as a critical point of comparison.

A REVIEW OF FOUR ONLINE ART ARCHIVES

African American Performance Art Archive (AAPAA)

Mission

The African American Performance Art Archive (AAPAA) is an online archive dedicated to preserving and providing access to research materials related to significant performances by six prominent African American artists. It is a free resource available to the public and is particularly useful to students, artists, educators and museum professionals seeking information on one of the artists in its collections. The AAPAA is modest in size and scope, but holds dozens of digitized scans of original and unique documents not available anywhere else on the web or in any other public repository. It brings together, in one place, critical materials and information about important artists that are, under-represented in traditional scholarly publications. This is largely due to the fact that minority artists working in all mediums have been, and continue to be, marginalized within academic art historical study. Additionally, the documentation and preservation of ephemeral works of art, such as performance art, is difficult and problematic (Manzella & Watkins, 2011). Thus documentation of performance art pieces by most of the artists represented by the AAPAA is produced and kept by the artists themselves, and therefore not readily available to the interested researchers.

It is crucial that the remnants and traces a performance leaves behind are preserved and made accessible so these artworks might come to be known or studied today and by future generations of artists and scholars. The AAPAA is incomplete and

remains an ongoing venture. Future iterations of the project will include an online community where individuals interested in African American performance art specifically, and the experience of black artists in the context of modern art history more generally, can discuss, collaborate and actively contribute to the collections. The artists of the AAPAA are still creating art, and in some cases, are re-imagining past performances for new audiences. The archive will play an important role in providing access to documentation concerning this active sect of the art world.

Producer

The AAPAA was created by John Bowles, Assistant Professor of Art History at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a group of graduate students during a semester long seminar in the fall of 2009. Funding for the project was initially provided by the Institute for the Arts and Humanities CHAT program (Collaborations: Humanities, Arts, Technology), but the project is now managed solely by Bowles and receives no continuing financial support.

Collections

The AAPAA holds collections of the following six artists: Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, Clifford Owens, Ben Patterson, Xaviera Simmons and Saya Woolfalk. The first six artists chosen for inclusion in the Archive were determined by Bowles, who has conducted research on their work. The artists were invited to contribute documents about their performances and other artworks. In some cases they mailed him original documents which were scanned and cataloged before being returned, while other artists sent previously digitized files or allowed access to streaming videos.

Although most of the archive consists of documentary photographs of particular performances, there are a number of different types of resources available in the AAPAA,

such as preparatory notes and drawings that document the artists' creative processes, exhibition announcements and posters. In addition to images and digital surrogates of primary source material, Bowles and his students wrote artist biographies, historical essays, and compiled bibliographies of relevant sources and websites. Some artists contributed their own writings, for example, Senga Nengudi wrote the essay "Maren and Me" specifically for the AAPAA and the collection of Saya Woolfalk includes an email interview with the artist that was conducted exclusively for the archive. These valuable and reliable resources demonstrate the possibilities of working closely with the artists and creators featured in an archive.

Website

The AAPAA was built as a Wordpress blog. This platform was chosen for its familiarity and ease of use. However, the presentation of an archive as a blog complicates search and browsing functionality since entries are organized in the order in which they were added to the website. The homepage presents a three by two grid of six boxes, one for each artist. By clicking on the representative image the visitor can begin exploring the collections [Fig. 1]. The materials are organized by artist only, although some item pages include links to "related materials." Individual records are most easily accessed through navigating the "pages" list at the right hand side of the page.

Record entries for objects associated with specific performances include a descriptive summary of the project, artist name, title, location, medium, dimensions, date, and current repository. The archive is live and usable but remains under construction, therefore complete descriptive data is not available for every entry, and there is a lack of uniformity in how information is presented.

Documents of 20th – century Latin American and Latino Art

Mission

Documents of 20th-century Latin American and Latino Art (ICAA Document Project) is described by Dr. Mari Carmen Ramirez, The Wortham Curator of Latin American Art and Director of the ICAA, as “a long-term archival, editorial, and bibliographic enterprise dedicated to the recovery and publication of thousands of primary source materials fundamental to deepening the appreciation and understanding of Latin American and Latino art” (Ramírez, 2012, p. 27). It is an ambitious, multi-million dollar, international initiative that began over a decade ago. The ICAA Document project digitally brings together archival material that is physically scattered throughout the United States and Latin America.

Although there have been improvements in recent decades, Latin American and Latino artistic practice has been notoriously under documented and has faced neglect by mainstream cultural institutions and archives in the United States (Caragol, 2005). The ICAA Documents Archive was developed in response to this dearth of accessible primary source materials available to researchers and scholars interested in Latin American and Latino art. Ramirez refers to this problem as a hindrance to the establishment of Latin American and Latino art as a robust and independent discipline (Ramírez, 2012).

The ICAA Document Project consists of two distinct yet complimentary components: a publicly accessible online archive, and a series of print publications. The core of the online archive will eventually be made up of nearly ten thousand digital images of primary sources. Each volume of the book series will feature primary source materials from the archive and essays written by artists, critics and curators and organized

around a central theme. The books will also provide translations of some archive items, thus providing broader access while promoting scholarship and research in the archives.

Producer

The ICAA Document Project was founded in 2002 by the International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA), a research institute of the Latin American Art Department at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts. Completion of the project required collaboration from dozens of institutions and experts. Financial support for the digital archive is provided The Bruce T. Halle Family Foundation, while the book series is underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Collections

The ICAA Documents Archive premiered in 2012 with around 2,500 of the nearly 10,000 documents that were collected during the “recovery phase” of the project (“ICAADOCS.mfah.org is Now Live,” 2012). Since that time thousands more items have been added. The collections are made up of materials found in archives and repositories belonging to individuals, families, communities and cultural institutions across Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela (“Project Components,” 2012). The scope is broad and includes artists’ writings, journal excerpts, correspondence, unpublished manuscripts, individual and group manifestos, lectures, and art reviews. Its status as “virtual” allowed the archive to collect digitized copies of material they may not have otherwise had access to, since owners were allowed to retain the original.

Collection content was determined by an editorial board made up of professional art historians and curators from the participating countries and communities (Ramírez, 2012). This group developed thirteen thematic “editorial categories” that guided the

collection development process: Abstracts vs. Figuratives; Art, Activism, and Social Change; Conceptualisms and Non-object-based Art; Exile, Displacement, Diaspora; Geometric and Constructive Utopias; Globalization; Graphics and Community-building; Latin American and/or Latino?; Mass Media, Technology, and Art; National Imaginaries and Cosmopolitan Identities; Race, Class, and Gender Issues; Recycling and Hybridity; Suprarealism, Magic Realism, and the Fantastic (“Editorial Framework,” 2012).

As postmodern archival theory has argued, all archives are the products of subjective selection influenced by contemporary social, cultural and political contexts. This is especially evident in the creation of the ICAA Documents Archive, which embraced “fragmentation and selectivity” as common conditions required for the success of the project (Ramírez, 2012, p. 30). The choices about what would be digitized were the responsibility of individuals, communities and institutions working together to recover material germane to the previously outlined and agreed upon themes. However, the editorial board makes the final decisions regarding document inclusion, as well as research and publication priorities for the book series. According to Ramirez (2012), these decisions are based on three core values that have guided the project: flexibility, adaptability and consensus. The traditional method of record acquisition, which prioritizes the original order and provenance, is too restrictive for a project as comprehensive as this, as Ramírez (2012) explains:

“Although the virtual nature of this initiative makes it open-ended and potentially infinite, the task of compiling an archive relating to such a vast and heterogeneous field as the visual arts in Latin America and the Latino United States requires an extremely selective, and one might even say, *curatorial approach*” (p. 30).

Website

Visitors to the ICAA Documents website can access the site in either English or Spanish. One enters the archive from the project's homepage by navigating to the archive tab and selecting to search or browse [fig. 2]. Users of the archive can search by keyword or conduct an advanced search with the ability to set filters based on year, type of material and place of publication. One can browse the collection by the afore mentioned editorial categories, or by the more usual options of title, author, topic, name or geography. An option to login to "My Documents" with a user name and password allows the user to further engage with the collection through the ability to save and email citations, curate a personal collection of documents, and download certain objects.

Every object in the archive is presented with its descriptive metadata, which includes: an ICAA record id number, author, title, imprint, description (length) language, type and genre, bibliographic citation, topic descriptors, name descriptors, geographic descriptors. Additionally, items have a synopsis and annotations, brief descriptions that contextualize the documents. The researcher and the team responsible for the recovery of the item are listed, as is the original location where the document was found.

Public Art Archive

Mission

The Public Art Archive (PAA) was launched in 2010 with the ambitious goal of creating a centrally located database with high quality images and descriptions of every public artwork in the United States and Canada ("About the PAA," 2010). The mission of the PAA is to increase awareness of public art among those for whom it was created, and provide a comprehensive research resource for public art administrators and artists

(Miller, 2013). According to Rebecca Cain, a member of the PAA advisory board, “With access to information about public art in one unified location, practitioners in the field can overcome their isolation and strengthen their networks” (Miller, 2013)

The development of the PAA came from a need of professionals and academics for a comprehensive resource containing accurate data about the objects and materials of their study. Much like in the cases of the AAPAA and ICAA Documents, the PAA filled an information void. In the realm of public art, information is scattered and difficult to locate, and existing resources are “silos of information... in individual city websites or in one-off websites by various people” (Miller, 2013). In place of these silos, the PAA hopes to become the definitive resource for information about public artworks in the United States and Canada. Although there are other listings of public art, PAA sets itself apart as a technologically sophisticated, sustainable, and continually expanding online database.

Producer

The PAA was started and continues to be supported by the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF), a regional, non-profit arts organization. The archive is managed by a senior advisory committee of thirteen public art professionals and scholars (“About the PAA,” 2012).

Collection

The Public Art Archive consists only of public art works in the United States and Canada that have been, according to the website: “...commissioned, gifted, adopted, or granted for the purpose of being presented in public for public benefit; and they must have been commissioned or acquired through an official process” (“About the PAA,” 2012). This definition is somewhat limited and means a great deal of art readily

appreciated by the public is excluded from the archive. But the PAA says its criteria for what constitutes an eligible work of public art is evolving and it defers to the senior advisory board for final decisions about what will be included (“About the PAA,” 2012). The majority of the collection is comprised of sculptural works from the 1990s and more recent works, but there are works from as early as 1903. There are around 100 different types of art, including new media projects and performance pieces (“About the PAA,” 2012). The PAA currently holds over 8,476 artworks, by 3,466 artists and there are 840 collections represented, the largest being the state of New Mexico, which has contributed 664 public artworks it owns.

Content for the archive is acquired in two ways: first, an interested public art administrator of an organization or municipality can contact and consult with a committee member directly about the addition of a group of works; second, the PAA seeks out individual submissions through community outreach via social media platforms Facebook, Tumblr and Twitter (Miller, 2013). Though the PAA relies on submissions from artists, the database is not directly populated through the communal effort of traditional crowdsourcing. They refer to their approach instead as “guided crowdsourcing,” because it involves “an intermediate person who confirms, curates, and adds [information] to the database” (Miller, 2013). There are strict guidelines for participation, you must be “a professional artist who has completed and installed public artwork, or an administrator of an established public art program based in the US or Canada” and individuals and organizations must complete a thorough application process before their entry is accepted (“About the PAA,” 2012). Applicants must submit no less than five photographs and responses to all of the following metadata fields: title;

creator/artist(s); creator/artist(s) website; date commissioned and installed; complete street address and geographic location; site placement (controlled vocabulary list); commissioning agency/owner; artwork type (controlled vocabulary list); descriptive statement; project budget; funding source (controlled vocabulary list); measurements; photo credit. While this process may seem tedious and restrictive, it ensures consistency and completeness among the metadata of each entry into the archive so that the record is searchable, findable, and accessible to the public.

Website

The PAA website is easy to navigate and explore. The homepage includes highlights from the archive, a featured collection and a featured artist [Fig. 3]. There is a keyword search bar, or the option to browse by seven different categories: artists, collections, locations, materials, worktype (i.e. sculpture, mural...), placement (park, building...) and year. The item record page includes all data categories listed above when applicable and each entry is accompanied by a detailed description of the work of art ranging from one to several paragraphs [fig. 4]. There are no links from the item record to related items or collections on the website, but there is often a hyperlink for the artist's webpage. The most recent development on the website has been the addition of an interactive Google map that gives the exact location of the work. One can also map items from the list of returned search items by clicking on the link "map this," which opens a Google Map that pinpoints the location of each artwork on the list. This new feature corresponds to the creation of a mobile-friendly version of the site, which broadens the appeal and usability of PAA, making it a great resource for scholarly researchers as well as cultural tourists and curious passers-by.

Europeana

Mission

Europeana is a digital repository of millions of culturally significant objects from galleries, libraries, archives and museums across Europe. It differs from the other three projects in that it provides a single point of access from which one can discover diverse materials from thousands of other institutions. Although Europeana is not dedicated specifically to art-related archival materials or art objects, it has partnered with many art museums to make digital images of works available through the website. Europeana has also been involved in a number of side-projects such as Digitizing Contemporary Art (DCA), which was an initiative to improve the representation of contemporary art on Europeana. DCA provided “metadata and images of 26,921 artworks and 1,857 contextual documents” from 12 European countries (“About DCA,” 2014). While Europeana’s collections are wide-ranging, they are committed to providing broad and dynamic access to art objects and other art related material.

Europeana has stated on its website that it has four primary goals: aggregate, facilitate, distribute and engage (“About Us,” 2014). Europeana provides a user friendly web portal and supports innovative collaborations among cultural institutions and reaches out to new audiences through the creative use of online technology. This large-scale, international effort consists of a group of 36 countries and thousands of partner institutions united in the belief that digital access to Europe’s cultural heritage promotes cultural diversity and the creative exchange of ideas and information that benefits society and the economy (“Europeana Foundation,” 2014).

Creator

The idea for an European digital library that would provide access to materials in libraries across Europe, was first proposed to the European Commission in 2005 (“About us,” 2014). A prototype was launched in 2008, and since that time Europeana has grown and evolved at a rapid rate. The online portal is managed and maintained by the Europeana Foundation, which was established by the European Commission, with particular leadership from the Biblioteca Nacional de España, the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the Institut National de l’Audiovisuel, France, the National Library of the Netherlands and Spain’s Ministerio de Educacion, Cultura y Deporte (Europeana Foundation,” 2014). The Europeana Foundation is housed in the Koninklijke Bibliotheek, the National Library of the Netherlands in the Hague, but the members of the board and executive committee represent a variety of cultural institutions and organizations from across Europe.

The majority of Europeana’s operational funds are provided by the European Commission and its 21 member states, however, according to the Europeana website, full funding from the Commission lasted only through the end of 2012, and in early 2013, a new budget proposal saw funding for the European Commissions digital culture initiatives decreased drastically from 9 billion to 1 billion (“Europeana Foundation,” 2014). As a result, the foundation has developed plans for generating revenue through new operational services and sponsorships (“Europeana Foundation,” 2014).

Collections

Europeana contains over 33 million distinct items, the majority of which are images and texts. There are 20,408,320 images of paintings, drawings maps and photographs, and 12,709,888 books, newspapers, and other archival documents, but

Europeana also features sound recordings, videos and three-dimensional digital models (Factsheet, 2014). The breadth and diversity of the available content is staggering and represents the contributions 2,300 cultural institutions. Users can access and explore high-quality digital scans of Carolingian illuminated manuscripts from the Royal Library of Belgium, hand-written letters by Charles Darwin from the University of Edinburgh, paintings by Rembrandt from the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, and WWI newsreels from the Filmoteca Española.

Each object is complete with descriptive metadata provided by the participating institution. At the start, XML files were mapped to the Europeana Semantic Elements (ESE), a metadata format based on Dublin Core (Concordia, 2009). As of 2013, however, Europeana has instituted an improved schema called the Europeana Data Model (EDM). It is important to the Europeana mission that their data be in the public domain and available for use by all, thus the Creative Commons CC0 has been applied to ESE and EDM (Factsheet, 2014).

Website

Europeana is more than an aggregator and supports its mission through a number of affiliated projects. In addition to the web portal, Europeana consists of three other websites: 1) Europeana Professional, which provides in depth information about Europeana Foundation and the project as a whole, 2) Europeana Exhibitions, a site devoted to virtual exhibitions highlighting specific objects in the archive, and 3) Europeana 1914-1918, a site that combines user-generated content with archival material related to WWI. The exhibition site and Europeana 1914-1918 are good examples of innovative curated introduction to the vast collections held by Europeana.

The Europeana portal website is available in 11 different European languages and is easy to navigate and use [Fig. 5]. There are a number of entry points into the collections, all of which are more suited to the casual visitor than the experienced researcher. The user-friendly website features a search bar on the homepage that allows for key-word search by title, creator, subject, date, or place. There is no advanced search, but on the results page one can add keywords and set other search limitations, including media type (image, text, sound, or video only), year and data provider. There are many options for browsing collections, including links to the blog, the virtual exhibitions website and a page highlighting newly acquired content. The homepage also includes links to items that have been posted to Pinterest, and information about a featured item and featured partner institution.

Users have the option to register and log in to the site to save searches, items and tags and translate object descriptions. The item record page provides basic information, details rights and use-restrictions, and has the option to save the item or share it on social media. Due to the wide variety of objects and contributors, the metadata for some item records are significantly more complete than others. In addition to the basic identifying information, the most robust records feature detailed descriptions and long lists of subject keywords, however, all include an “identifier,” a stable link to the object record in the catalog of the original institution. This element helps to maintain reliability in the resource, since all information about an object can be easily compared and verified against what is available on the website of the institution that holds the object.

DISCUSSION

Through the process of appraising, collecting and preserving documents and artifacts, archives serve a critical function in the formation of historical and cultural memory and identity. But as postmodern, deconstructionist theory has illuminated, the archival record is neither neutral nor constant and the metaphorical concept of archives as memory have further shifted with the advent of the internet. In the online world archives have, at times, become indistinguishable from the library and the museum. Additionally, the term has been co-opted by scholars from diverse disciplines. According to Wolfgang Ernst (2013), such "inflationary use of the term archive for all conceivable forms of memory has long since distorted it beyond recognition." (p. 85). But the term is not meaningless, and its use to describe a broad range of online collections is significant. The word "archive" is associated with several other vague, yet compelling terms, such as "culture", "memory", "preservation", "history", and "authority." Despite, or more likely, because the word has been so widely evoked and applied, "archive" remains a notion with which cultural heritage programs (digital or analog) want to be identified. Monks-Leeson (2011) has suggested that as archivists, we must not dismiss these variable uses of the term "archive" but "instead seek to understand how different groups or individuals use the term in different contexts" (p. 54) This is one way the field of archival science can benefit from an analysis of online archives like those discussed in this paper. Ernst (2013) has noted that the traditional archive is associated with static memory, whereas, "the notion of the archive in internet communication tends to move the archive

toward an economy of circulation: permanent transformations and updating. The so-called cyberspace is not primarily about memory as cultural record but rather about a performative form of memory as communication." (p. 99). Several years earlier, in 1990, Kenneth Foote expressed a similar sentiment, "archives can be seen as a valuable means of extending the temporal and spatial range of human communication" (p. 379.) This idea of communication across space and time is inherent to the traditional archive, however the concept of "memory as communication," as opposed to "memory as record" can be more readily applied to those archives that exist in cyberspace. The document or object is still important as the basis of any collection, whether it be in an archive, library or museum; but beyond the traditional ideals of organization and preservation for evidentiary purposes, the true mission of the online archive is to provide access and a mode for users to creatively engage with and re-examine records. A better understanding of how an internet "archive" is created and utilized by different groups can help traditional archives improve access, outreach and the communicative potential of their records.

For the AAPAA, the term "archive" is an apt description as it contains conventional primary source, archival materials organized into collections based on the artist that produced the records. This type of organizational schema can be seen in traditional art archives, where the acquired collections largely consist of the personal papers of an individual artist. But the nature of an online medium easily allows for the inclusion of multi-media records such as video and linked data that promotes the discovery of related items. One key difference between the AAPAA and a traditional archive is that it was not necessary to keep records in any original order. The items were

provided by the artists themselves and curated by the creator of the archive. Their meaning is not derived from any original organizational context, instead they are to be viewed and understood through the consciously crafted context and themes of the archive.

The ICAA Documents Project also contains primary source material of the type one would expect to find in a traditional archive. Like the AAPAA, the archive has a specialized focus on minority artists that have been neglected by the mainstream canon. Research teams were dispatched into the field to find and digitize archival material deemed pertinent to the project's goal of building a diverse and comprehensive archive about Latin American art. Materials were not digitized and migrated onto the internet in a way that maintained their original order, for there was none to uphold. Items were chosen based on their relevance to the previously constructed and defined themes. The nature of the ICAA Documents Project necessarily views the contexts of the materials as variable and embraces this fact by allowing objects to be included in multiple and overlapping thematic collections. While the organizational structure might initially be viewed as an affront to the principal of provenance, which "dictates that the records of different origins be kept separate to preserve their context" (Monks-Leeson, 2011, p. 42); the ICAA Documents Project provides information about the individual or repository from which the record came. Although the records are not organized with respect to that knowledge, the fact that it was maintained aids in the determination of the reliability of the record, while still allowing for creative and productive re-contextualization of the record that comes with thematic arrangement.

Although the Public Art Archive refers to itself as an archive, unlike the AAPAA and ICAA Documents Project, it does not include digital surrogates of archival material about an individual or institution. Instead, its database provides photographic reproductions of physical works of public art and detailed metadata about the art object. For this reason, the Public Art Archive might be more accurately described as a digital collection or database. However, the three projects are similar in that each aspires to create a cohesive, thematic collection of art related information that was previously unavailable or difficult to obtain, which is a crucial and unifying theme of many online-only archives.

Europeana differs significantly from the other three because it is a powerful aggregator of archival materials, art objects and multi-media from traditional cultural heritage institutions across Europe. In their article titled, “Not just another portal, not just another digital library: A portrait of Europeana as an application program interface,” Gradmann and Siebinga (2010) explain that although Europeana is seen by most “as a large collection of surrogate objects representing born digital or digitized cultural heritage objects which themselves remain outside the Europeana data space,” it is, in fact, an API that will allow users to build unique applications and websites that employ and expand upon the functionalities of the Europeana software system (p. 63). Europeana is by far the most extensive and ambitious project of its kind, and it has invoked all aspects of internet technology, including social networking, to fulfill its mission to make the collections of Europe’s cultural heritage institutions more usable and relevant to more people.

The four online art and cultural archives reviewed differ significantly with respect to collection development and content, funding and support, and web presence, but they are alike in that all mention access as a primary goal central to the mission of the project and greater public access leads to increased engagement with materials. In the past century, traditional institutional archives have shifted focus from collecting and preserving to making collections available for public use, and today, archives exist for the people (Cook, 2000, p. 18). In 2000, Cook predicted that archival institutions would become virtual “archives without walls” and exist on the internet so that they might facilitate greater access and discovery through their interlinked databases (p. 23). Since then, most archives, museums and libraries have digitized some of their collections and made them searchable and accessible through the web. But there is a particular focus on access and outreach that is inherent to online-only archives since they exist in a medium built for the sole purpose of efficiently sharing information. Perhaps more important than physical access is the power that access to such information can engender. As Schwartz and Cook said in 2002, “The revolutionary capacity and speed of information technology, to transmit information in all media to geographically, socially, and culturally dispersed audiences, present archives with the power to make records accessible to a public that is itself empowered by that very access” (p. 15). The internet has provided a platform for the proliferation of collections that cater to specific needs and populations, particularly those communities that have been underserved in the past.

Traditional archives are continually growing and changing, albeit sometimes very slowly. Online archives, on the other hand, are able to adapt and change with relative speed and ease. The AAPAA, the ICAA Document Project, the Public Art Archive, and

Europeana, are all works in progress. They will continue to grow and expand in a way that is only possible in the online environment. For example, both the AAPAA and the PAA hope to generate future content through user participation and crowd-sourcing. Collaborating with users is an efficient approach to growing collections and also develops a collection that is more suited to its users' needs. Unlike traditional archives that may passively acquire new collections, these four digital projects are in the business of outreach and collaboration. In the proceedings for a colloquium titled New Skills for a digital age, hosted by NARA and SAA in 2006, collaboration was cited as a crucial skill that needed to be developed among archives. The AAPAA, ICAA Document Project, PAA and Europeana were all produced through collaboration between the repository and the institutions or artists and creators from which it received its content. The ICAA Document Project and Europeana in particular required a great deal of complex, international collaboration between institutions and individuals. Although that level of coordination requires the financial and technical support of a large institution, the other two projects are comparatively modest and succeeded in some level of collaborative development while making future plans for more. There is an active element to these projects that negates the persistent stereotype of the archive as a sleepy and dusty place. Today's online archives are engaging and exciting spaces and can serve as good examples for how physical repositories of all sizes and means might present their collections digitally or use the internet to reach out to new users or establish collaborative projects with other institutions.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are many questions that remain to be asked about the relationships between online-only archives, digital libraries and repositories and traditional archives. This exploratory study reviewed and compared four online archives, focusing on how their development demonstrates the effects of postmodern theory and the development of the internet on the archival discipline and the evolution of archives both off and online. Increased accessibility as well as more inclusivity regarding what kinds of materials are being collected and archived and by whom, are two critical issues highlighted here. Future research could include a larger more comprehensive survey of the multitude of cultural heritage and art archives that exist only as online collections, and an assessment of how they are acquired and arranged. Such a study could serve as the foundation for research into the representational and organizational structure of materials in online archives, an issue briefly touched on here. Elizabeth Yakel has described archival representation as a “fluid, evolving, and socially constructed practice” (1998, p. 2). In this era of rapid change, a better understanding of material representation in the online environment could translate into improved preservation and access and further evolve our definition and understanding of the social practice of archiving culture in the internet-age.

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FIGURES

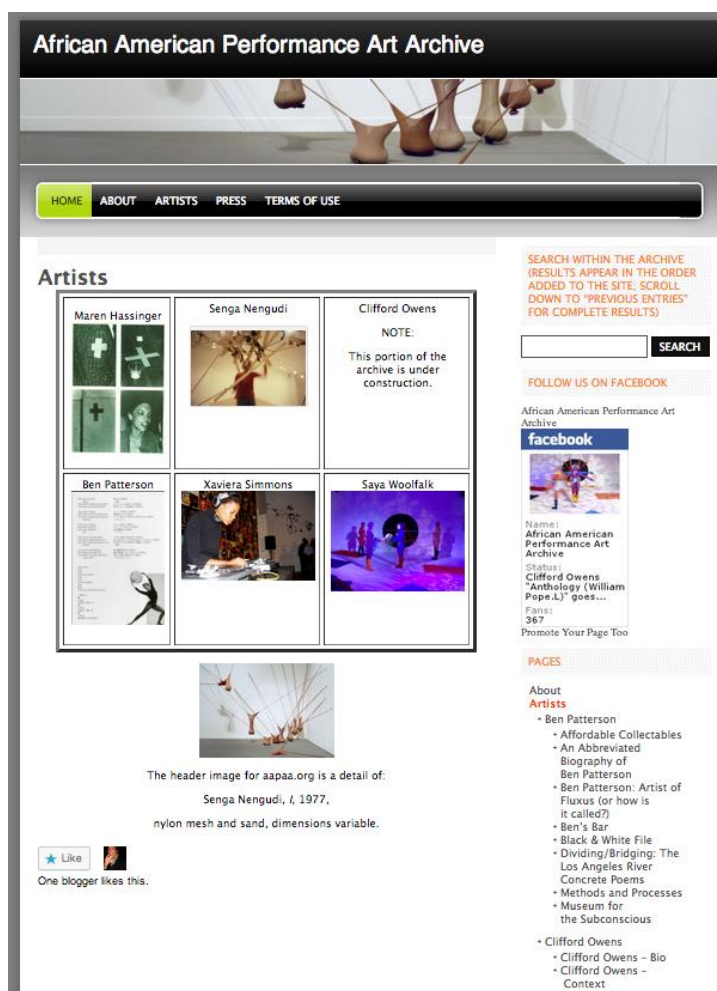


Figure 1
AAPAA Homepage
<http://aapaa.org/>



Figure 2

ICAA Docs Digital Archive and Publications Project Homepage
<http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/en-us/home.aspx>

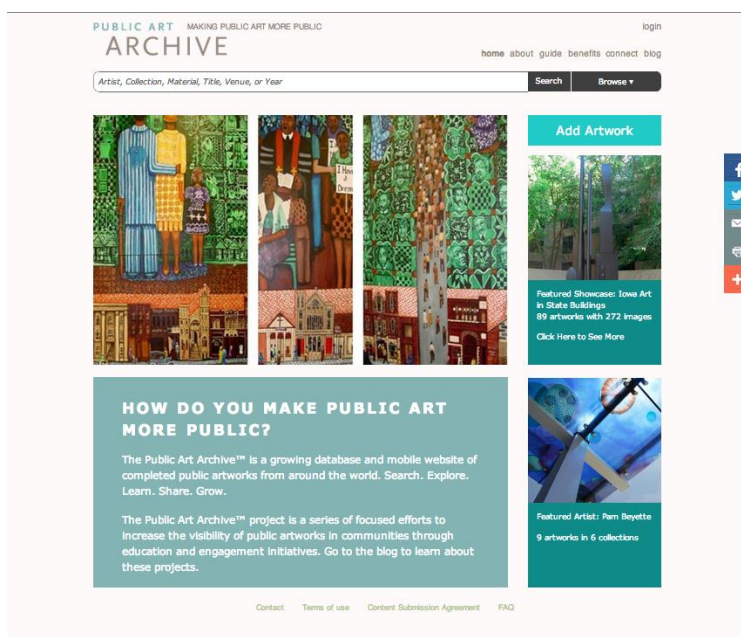


Figure 3

The Public Art Archive Homepage
<http://www.publicartarchive.org/>

PUBLIC ART MAKING PUBLIC ART MORE PUBLIC

ARCHIVE

login

home about guide benefits connect blog

Artist, Collection, Material, Title, Venue, or Year

Search Browse


Artwork #1 of 4

Previous Next Back to Search Results




140 West Plaza

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Mikyong Kim (<http://mikyongkim.com/>)




Courtesy: Mark La Rosa

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Franklin Street Plaza, 140 West Franklin Street, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 27516

Also known as: Project Exhale

Date: 2008, 2013

Placement: plazas

Collection: Town of Chapel Hill, Public and Cultural Arts Office

Artwork Type: outdoor sculpture


Material: stainless steel, lighting device components, water, concrete

Description: The integrated sculpture of Exhale is located in the newly designed Franklin Street Plaza, at the intersection of Church and Franklin Street in Art Area I. The concept of the art piece is to highlight water as the connection to the natural hydrologic cycles of the site. The sculpture is a layered perforated metal skin that allows for fog to emanate through the textured surfaces of the piece. The surface of the sculpture

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Figure 4
 The Public Art Archive, Item Record Page
140 West Plaza, Milkyong Kim, 2008
<http://www.publicartarchive.org/work/140-west-plaza#date>

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 the digital library of Europe


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New & Improved - Europeana 1914-1918

Take a look at the new and improved Europeana 1914-1918 website and browse the most important pan-European collection of original First World War source material.

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From the blog 



Wear your hat!


Hats are wonderful and tricky at the same time. What started out as a functional piece of clothing to protect the wearer from the sun and the wind, has moved on to a fashion accessory. They are still extremely useful. ...



New Virtual Exhibition: "To My Peoples!"

Together with the Austrian National Library and Google Cultural Institute we created a new virtual exhibition to commemorate the First World War. Based on the physical exhibition curated by renowned historian Univ.-Prof. Dr. Manfred Rauchensteiner, aspects of the First World War's ...


Featured Item



Europe in a Library


The female personification of Europe sits on a horse in a library. In her hands a sceptre and a cornucopia. She is joined by putti with attributes that symbolize the Arts and Sciences. In the background are two men in a workshop.


Featured Partner








National Gallery of Ireland

The National Gallery of Ireland houses the Irish national collection of Irish and European art. It is located in the centre of Dublin with one entrance on Merrion Square, beside Leinster House, and another on Clare Street. Due to ongoing renovations, the Clare Street entrance is the only one currently open. It was founded in 1854 and opened its doors ten years later. The Gallery has an extensive, representative collection of Irish painting and is also notable for its Italian Baroque and Dutch masters painting.

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Figure 5
Europeana Homepage
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